

Throwback: Donald Byrd-Love Has Come Around



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Donald Byrd began building his warm-toned trumpet as a youngster and was playing professionally with Lionel Hampton by the time he finished high school. He earned a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University and a master's from The Manhattan School of Music in the '50's. His skills as a serious hard bop trumpeter earned him a spot with Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers to replace his idol Clifford Brown. His recording career started during this time period and he made several records as a sideman and leader for the Prestige and Savoy labels. When his stint with the Messengers ended he started working with a pre-Miles Davis Herbie Hancock, Thelonius Monk, John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins. He formed his first group with saxophonist Pepper Adams and they recorded one of Byrd's most celebrated albums, *At The Half Note Cafe*. A trip to Europe in 1963 extended his musical education because he studied with famed French composer/teacher/conductor Nadia Boulanger and jammed with Eric Dolphy two weeks before his passing. Byrd utilized his teaching abilities with jobs at Rutgers, Howard and New York University and some of his Howard students would become The Blackbyrds. Despite making a name for himself with the bop-style of jazz he became interested in reaching younger fans because of Miles Davis' fusion period. Albums like *Fancy Free* and *Ethiopian Knights* were the beginning of his soul jazz sound but it was the entrance of Larry and Fonce Mizell that helped him achieve the most polished "blue collar jazz" style. In 1972 Blue Note released Byrd's *Black Byrd* which was produced and mostly written by Larry Mizell. ["Flight Time"](#) and ["Black Byrd"](#) helped make the project the biggest selling album for Blue Note despite all

the cacophony from jazz purist critics. The winning streak with the Mizell brothers continued with the albums, *Street Lady*, *Steppin' Into Tomorrow* and *Places and Spaces*. ["Lansana's Priestess,"](#) ["Street Lady,"](#) ["Think Twice,"](#) ["Change \(Makes You Wanna Hustle\),"](#) ["Wind Parade,"](#) and ["Fallin' \(Like Dominoes\)"](#) all come from this trio of albums. *Caricatures* was Byrd's last album for Blue Note and he also parted ways with the Mizell brothers before signing to Elektra. The success of his more popular albums did not stop his passion for education and in 1976 he finished law school and in 1982 he received a doctorate from Columbia Teachers College. *Thank You...F.U.M.L (Funking Up My Life)* was his first album for Elektra and Syreeta Wright is the singer of ["Loving You."](#) "Love Has Come Around" is from his 1981 album *Love Byrd* and Isaac Hayes produced and played on the record with Byrd's 125 Street N.Y.C. Band. In the '80's he recorded and taught but the music did not have the same impact as his earlier days. A return to bop occurred in 1990 on the *Getting Down To Business* album and he also appeared on ["Lounging"](#) from Guru's first Jazzmatazz project, his second Jazzmatazz album and ["Time Is Moving On"](#) from the *Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool* album. In 2009 Donald Byrd was an artist-in-residence at Delaware University.